



Michigan Agri-Business Association

1501 North Shore Drive, Suite A
East Lansing, Michigan 48823

www.miagbiz.org

Telephone (517) 336-0223
Fax (517) 336-0227

October 21, 2013

Testimony from Jim Byrum, president of the Michigan Agri-Business Association

As technological advances revolutionize Michigan's agriculture sector, farmers and agribusiness require reliable access to wireless broadband to manage and grow their businesses. In today's economy, agriculture simply cannot operate without it.

Michigan's agricultural industry has been a major economic driver over the past decade, bringing in \$91.4 billion annually to the state. To continue that economic growth, agriculture needs access to a consistent mobile communications infrastructure. Mobile broadband access equips farmers and agri-businesses with the tools they need to compete and thrive in a global economy. Many farmers are now using broadband-enabled apps for their mobile devices that help them more efficiently manage markets, facilities, crops, land, livestock and commerce.

Last week, we had the opportunity to take members of the Michigan Public Service Commission and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation on a tour of farms and agribusinesses to show them firsthand how this infrastructure is used. For example, at Walther Farms in Hemlock, they use broadband to get updates on the temperature and moisture conditions in their potato storage facilities on their mobile phones, and they can adjust the climate control settings remotely.

Another great example is Crop Production Services in Breckenridge. They use a combination of global positioning systems and wireless broadband to manage their equipment and apply fertilizer and other crop protection materials in a precisely targeted way that maximizes efficiency and prevents waste. These operations rely on broadband connections to transmit data, and manage their operations.

These are a few examples of how wireless broadband helps agriculture solve problems and seize opportunities in real time, without delays, so their businesses can better compete, succeed and create local jobs.

Mobile broadband can also connect farmers and agri-businesses with markets around the world to help them solve problems with livestock production and crop systems, open up new learning opportunities and allow them to incorporate new and more efficient practices into their operations. Access to reliable wireless broadband even helps farmers keep abreast of markets and sell their products when it makes sense.

Reliable broadband access isn't just good for farmers; it's also a major driver of rural economic development. According to the National Agriculture and Rural Development Policy Center, higher broadband adoption rates translate into real economic benefits for rural areas. They found that areas where broadband adoption rates are above 60 percent show an increase in median household income, more job opportunities and decreased poverty and unemployment rates.

Michigan agriculture needs reliable access to mobile and broadband networks to manage their businesses, get up-to-date information and access new markets. Promoting a regulatory environment that sparks investment in this critical infrastructure will drive continued economic growth and job creation in our state.

Contact:

Jim Byrum

President

Michigan Agri-Business Association

(517) 336-0223